

# DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING



## ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Everyone has an opportunity to succeed when they have access to high-quality early care and education programs and services.



The annual report for the Division of Early Learning is required by Section 1002.82, Florida Statutes. Copies are available to download from [www.floridaearlylearning.com](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com) or by contacting the division at 850-717-8550.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is provided by the Florida Department of Education's Division of Early Learning (DEL) as an overview of the division's financial and program activities in fiscal year (FY) 2022-23 as well as for the 30 early learning coalitions (ELCs) and Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) that the division partners with to administer the School Readiness (SR) program, the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) education program and the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) program.

The ELCs and RCMA work to meet the early care and education needs of local communities by planning services based on area needs, creating networks of public and private providers, establishing public and private partnerships to leverage economies of scale, and collecting match dollars to serve additional families. They are governed by federal grant program requirements and state laws.

Enclosed you will find summaries and overviews of:

- Expenditures associated with the programs the division administers.
- Fraud referrals made by the division's Inspector General's Office.
- Information about the activities of Florida's ELCs and RCMA.

For more information about DEL, please visit <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/>.

## GENERAL FUNCTIONS

### Early Care and Education

DEL is dedicated to providing accessible, affordable and quality early learning services for the state's children and families. In partnership with the state's ELCs and RCMA, DEL administers the following three programs:

- **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)** is a network that helps families identify and select quality child care options that best meet their needs.
- The **School Readiness Program (SR)** offers financial assistance to low-income families for early education and care so they can become financially self-sufficient and their young children can be successful in school in the future.
- **Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)** is a free educational program that prepares 4-year-olds for success in kindergarten and beyond.

DEL governs operations of early learning programs for the state and administers funds to ELCs and other statewide providers. Other duties related to early learning programs are outlined in federal and/or state regulations including federal reporting requirements, programmatic/financial monitoring and other oversight tasks.

### Customer Service Satisfaction

With the goal of enhancing the service experience for those participating in early learning programs and strengthening community engagement, House Bill 419 was passed in 2021 establishing a coalition customer satisfaction survey that is now an element of the coalition performance standards in s. 1002.82(3)(a), F.S. A workgroup provided recommendations on the survey questions to gauge the customer service experience at all 30 ELCs and RCMA locations across the state. In January 2023, implementation of monthly outreach began with clients who requested CCR&R services, families eligible for SR and VPK programs, providers contracted to serve those SR and VPK families, and coalition and RCMA board members.

Initial implementation of the survey in FY 2022-23 laid the groundwork to ensure future enhancements to each survey's questionnaire and processes, methodology to distribute and the algorithm to evaluate answers, while working to increase the number of responses in the future. Survey results from FY 2023-24 will inform the establishment of baseline data. In successive years, DEL will calculate annually each ELC's survey results, determine whether each ELC result meets or exceeds the required customer satisfaction survey threshold and oversee corrective action as needed.



## Child Care Resource and Referral

DEL is responsible for the statewide resource and referral network and contracts with ELCs and RCMA for services in each of Florida’s 67 counties. Each ELC is responsible for providing services to families and providers in their communities at no cost.

Each ELC has a designated CCR&R coordinator to lead the work of the CCR&R program at their organization. To support this vital role, the CCR&R State Network developed a CCR&R Coordinator Guide to teach new CCR&R coordinators about program requirements, expectations and other key program elements. The CCR&R Coordinator Guide includes best practices to enhance program service delivery.

In FY 2022-23, the CCR&R State Network (Network) held four new CCR&R Coordinator Orientations, offered to every new CCR&R coordinator. The training focuses on best practices, technology resources, family engagement, assistance for potential and current providers, staff development and training, customer service and quality assurance.

The Network also provided ongoing training to ELCs and their subcontractors, facilitating six CCR&R leadership webinars that focused on the early identification and referral process, establishing customized plans that promote economic self-sufficiency and community collaboration, comprehensive social services available in Head Start, programmatic monitoring and requirements, family engagement, data integrity, service delivery trends, provider updates and market rate, CCR&R training modules and consumer education.

### FY 2022-23 CCR&R Service Requests

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>28,936</b>  | Number of requests for assistance through the State CCR&R’s toll-free number and CCR&R’s Help Inbox. |
| <b>268,958</b> | Number of CCR&R Family Intake Forms completed in DEL’s single statewide information system.          |
| <b>10,772</b>  | Number of legally operating child care providers maintained in a directory by ELCs.                  |



## **School Readiness Program**

Florida's SR program offers low-income families financial assistance to facilitate access to high-quality child care and early education for their children while parents work or participate in job training.

DEL administers the program at the state level while ELCs administer the SR program at the county and regional levels. Funding comes from four sources—the Child Care and Development Block Grant, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant, the Social Services Block Grant, and the State of Florida.

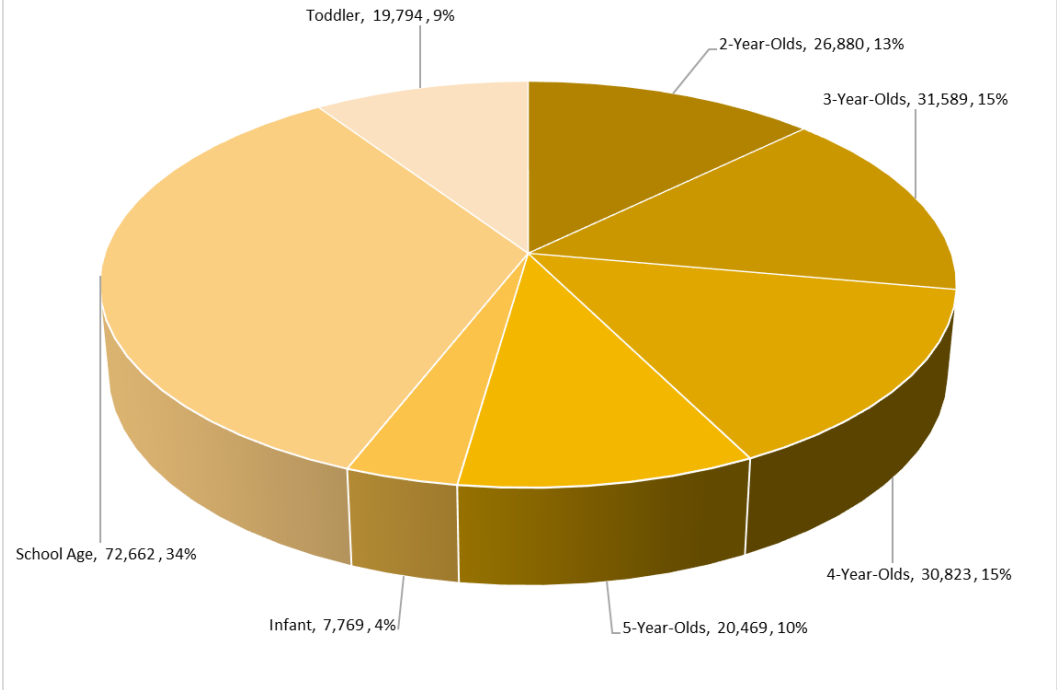
The program's two main goals are to help families become financially self-sufficient and help each child from a qualifying family develop school readiness skills. The program gives children access to a quality early learning environment and supports parents with information about child development and family engagement. The quality environment of each SR provider is measured by the administration of a widely recognized tool that assesses the interactions between adults and children in the classroom.

Florida's SR Program works to:

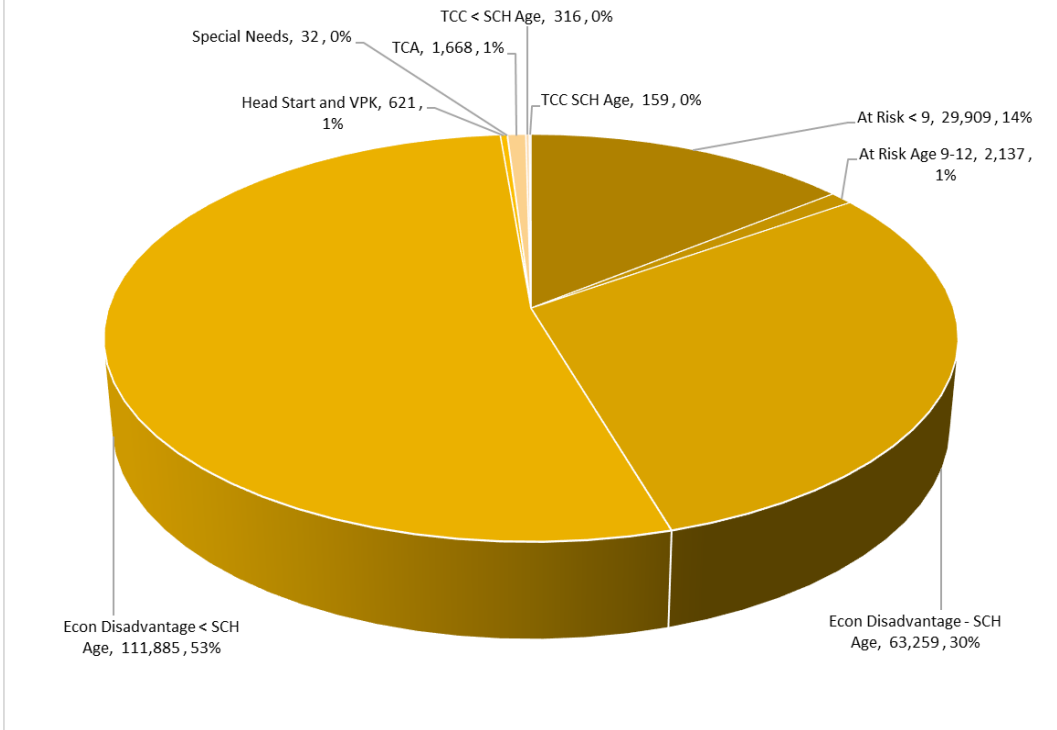
- Prepare young children to start kindergarten ready to learn.
- Help working families afford quality early learning services.
- Keep parents in the workforce and/or participating in education or training activities.
- Help families become financially independent.
- Provide parents information about child development and family well-being.

In FY 2022-23, there were 209,986 children enrolled with 6,790 early learning providers in Florida's SR program.

**School Readiness Enrollments  
by Age Group FY 2022-2023 (209,986)**



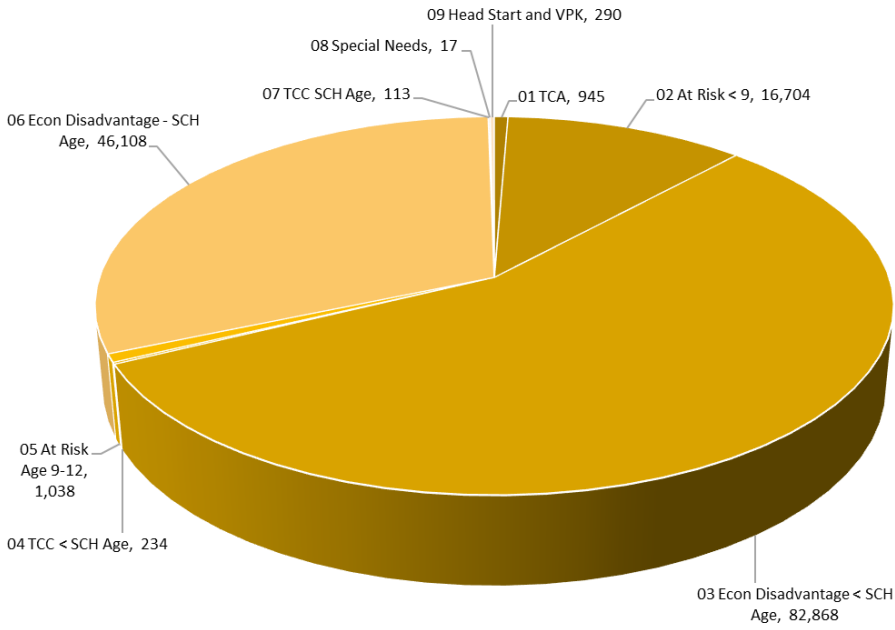
**School Readiness Enrollments  
by Priority Group: FY 2022-2023 (209,986)**



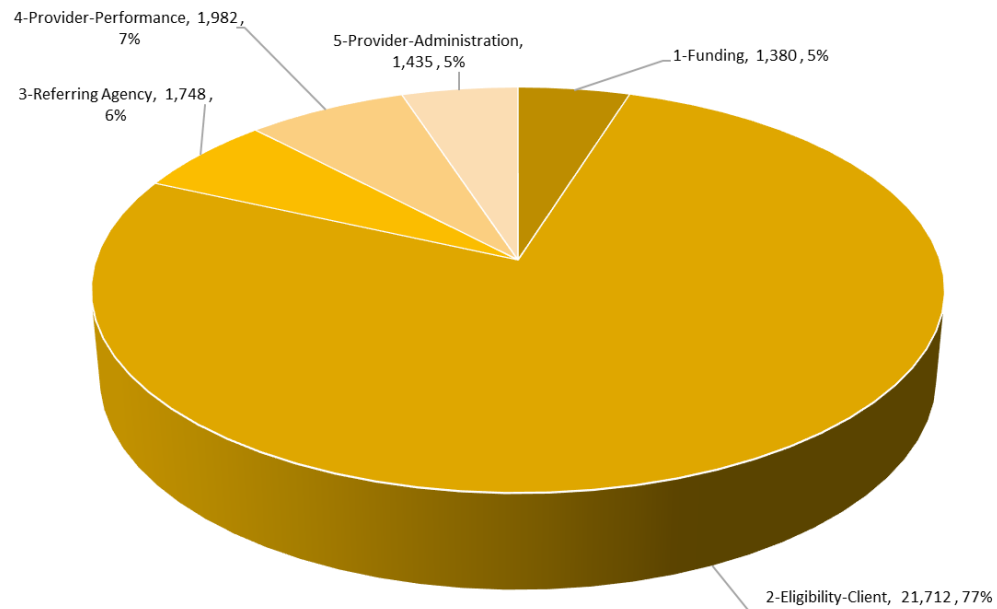
Source: From EFS Modernization as of November 1, 2023.



**School Readiness Enrollments  
Monthly Averages by Priority Group FY 2022-2023 (148,317)**



**School Readiness Disenrollments  
by Source of Action FY 2022-2023 (28,257)**



Source: From EFS Modernization as of November 1, 2023.

## FY 2022-23 SR Enrollment Count by Coalition

| Coalition             | Child Count    |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Alachua               | 2,549          |
| Big Bend              | 5,412          |
| Brevard               | 5,524          |
| Broward               | 19,701         |
| Duval                 | 12,573         |
| Emerald Coast         | 1,756          |
| Escambia              | 3,570          |
| Flagler and Volusia   | 5,906          |
| Florida's Gateway     | 2,337          |
| Florida's Heartland   | 2,171          |
| Hillsborough          | 18,753         |
| IRMO                  | 2,446          |
| Lake                  | 2,721          |
| Manatee               | 3,778          |
| Marion                | 3,138          |
| Miami-Dade/<br>Monroe | 24,297         |
| Nature Coast          | 2,359          |
| North Florida         | 4,977          |
| Northwest Florida     | 3,632          |
| Orange                | 16,105         |
| Osceola               | 3,411          |
| Palm Beach            | 21,092         |
| Pasco-Hernando        | 5,663          |
| Pinellas              | 8,847          |
| Polk                  | 7,781          |
| Santa Rosa            | 1,018          |
| Sarasota              | 1,686          |
| Seminole              | 3,264          |
| Southwest Florida     | 7,279          |
| St. Lucie             | 4,316          |
| RCMA                  | 1,924          |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>209,986</b> |

## FY 2022-23 School Readiness Program – Waiting List History

To help families waiting for SR services, DEL works with local CCR&R specialists to provide families with information about other programs they may be eligible for, such as Head Start, Early Head Start and other locally funded programs that offer free or reduced-priced child care. Local CCR&R programs also provide families with lists of locally funded community resources to help families until SR program funding becomes available.

| Fiscal Year            | 12-13  | 13-14  | 14-15  | 15-16  | 16-17  | 17-18  | 18-19  | 19-20  | 20-21  | 21-22  | 22-23 |
|------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| July                   | 78,892 | 60,659 | 56,471 | 53,380 | 38,308 | 28,197 | 25,302 | 21,052 | 18,612 | 11,838 | 5,968 |
| August                 | 68,414 | 57,750 | 64,687 | 52,527 | 43,945 | 33,593 | 34,597 | 23,502 | 15,932 | 13,388 | 7,698 |
| September              | 73,168 | 49,419 | 68,811 | 50,249 | 44,132 | 33,626 | 35,215 | 21,770 | 17,433 | 11,991 | 5,750 |
| October                | 68,516 | 47,826 | 68,950 | 42,560 | 40,356 | 34,071 | 30,702 | 22,676 | 15,657 | 9,693  | 5,498 |
| November               | 71,933 | 42,609 | 68,437 | 35,317 | 36,478 | 33,194 | 17,813 | 22,567 | 12,606 | 9,369  | 6,445 |
| December               | 67,676 | 36,770 | 64,548 | 30,926 | 31,915 | 31,237 | 21,695 | 21,543 | 13,143 | 9,172  | 6,452 |
| January                | 60,259 | 36,684 | 61,840 | 29,106 | 31,508 | 30,326 | 18,588 | 19,164 | 12,782 | 7,445  | 4,343 |
| February               | 58,134 | 37,121 | 58,614 | 25,774 | 28,835 | 29,553 | 16,945 | 14,554 | 10,982 | 7,173  | 3,758 |
| March                  | 58,322 | 37,867 | 51,397 | 25,941 | 25,871 | 29,064 | 18,552 | 14,589 | 9,077  | 6,851  | 4,220 |
| April                  | 57,182 | 43,624 | 53,596 | 27,260 | 26,053 | 27,227 | 17,525 | 14,968 | 6,808  | 5,416  | 3,676 |
| May                    | 45,959 | 47,956 | 56,748 | 34,730 | 25,469 | 28,939 | 16,628 | 16,350 | 7,045  | 5,339  | 4,099 |
| June                   | 65,032 | 52,336 | 59,057 | 36,872 | 26,550 | 31,399 | 15,231 | 20,588 | 11,230 | 4,206  | 4,964 |
| Monthly Average        | 64,457 | 45,885 | 61,096 | 37,054 | 33,285 | 30,869 | 22,399 | 19,444 | 12,609 | 8,490  | 5,239 |
| Sum of Monthly Maximum | 78,892 | 60,659 | 68,950 | 53,380 | 44,132 | 34,071 | 35,215 | 23,502 | 18,612 | 13,388 | 7,698 |
| Sum of Monthly Minimum | 45,959 | 36,684 | 51,397 | 25,774 | 25,469 | 27,227 | 15,231 | 14,554 | 6,808  | 4,206  | 3,676 |

Source: From EFS Modernization as of November 1, 2023.

Monthly counts represent the number of children waiting for School Readiness services on the last day of the month.

## SR Program Assessments

Florida continues to lead the nation with our commitment to building the foundation for success of our young Floridians. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS) is the program assessment used to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions in both SR and VPK programs. In FY 2022-23, more than 3,600 SR providers participated in CLASS. The quality environment of each SR provider has been assessed by the administration of CLASS since 2018.

| HISTORICAL SR PROGRAM ASSESSMENT CONTRACTING THRESHOLDS |  |
|---|--|
| Program Year  | Minimum Contracting Threshold on CLASS |
| 2019-2020   | 2.51                                   |
| 2020-2021   | 3.50                                   |
| 2021-2022   | 3.50                                   |
| 2022-2023   | 4.00                                   |

Providers, unless exempt, must receive a score of at least 4.00 on the CLASS to be eligible to receive an SR contract. Contracted SR providers can receive up to a 10 percent differential reimbursement rate based on their program assessment scores. In FY 2022-23, 1,168

providers with program assessment composite scores of 4.50 to 4.99 received a 4-percent differential; 1,451 providers with composite scores of 5.00 to 5.99 received a 7-percent differential; and 330 providers with composite scores of 6.00 to 7.00 received a 10-percent differential.

In FY 2022-23, more than 97 percent (3,606) of participating SR providers met the minimum contracting threshold by scoring 4.00 or higher on CLASS. Of that number, more than 80 percent of participating providers received a CLASS composite score higher than 4.50 making them eligible to receive a quality performance incentive. Providers who receive a score below 4.00 can no longer contract as a SR provider. However, if the provider is in a child care desert, the ELC may waive the program assessment if the provider agrees to be on a quality improvement plan (QIP) for 12 months. At the end of the fiscal year, 44 out of 79 SR providers were on a QIP, and 35 providers no longer contract as a SR provider.

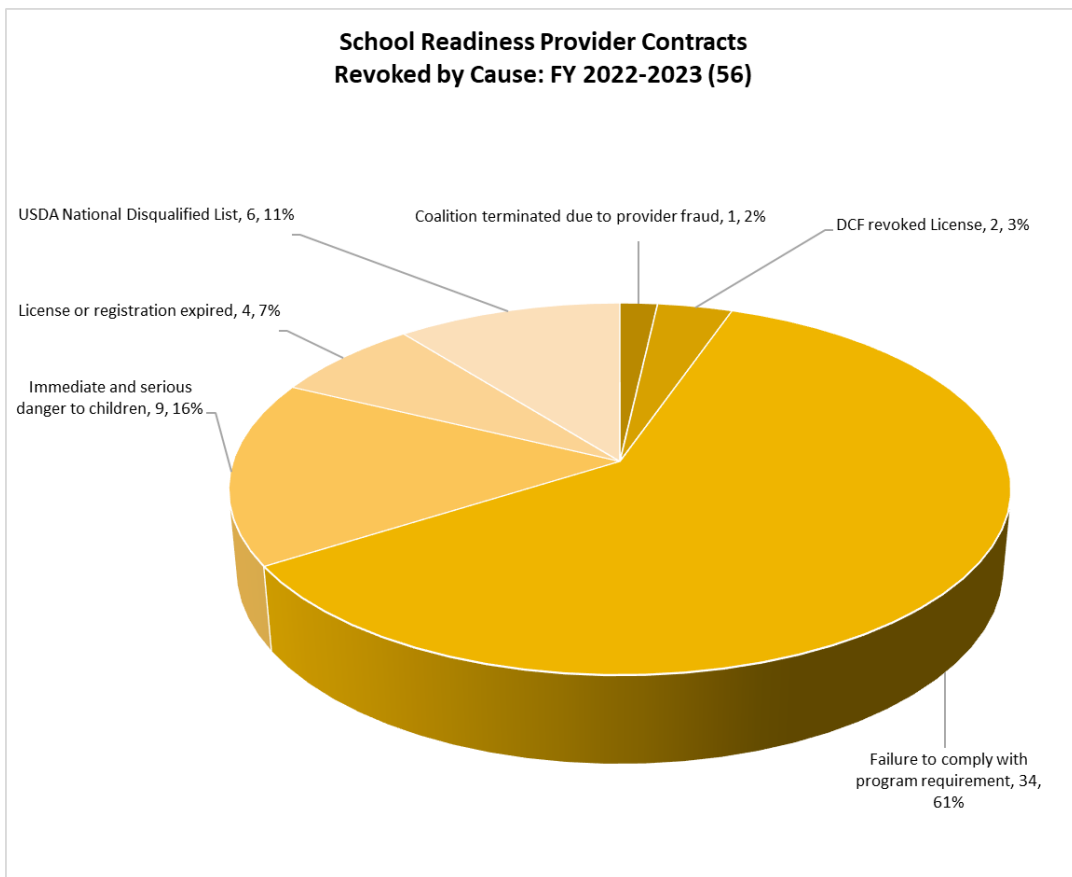
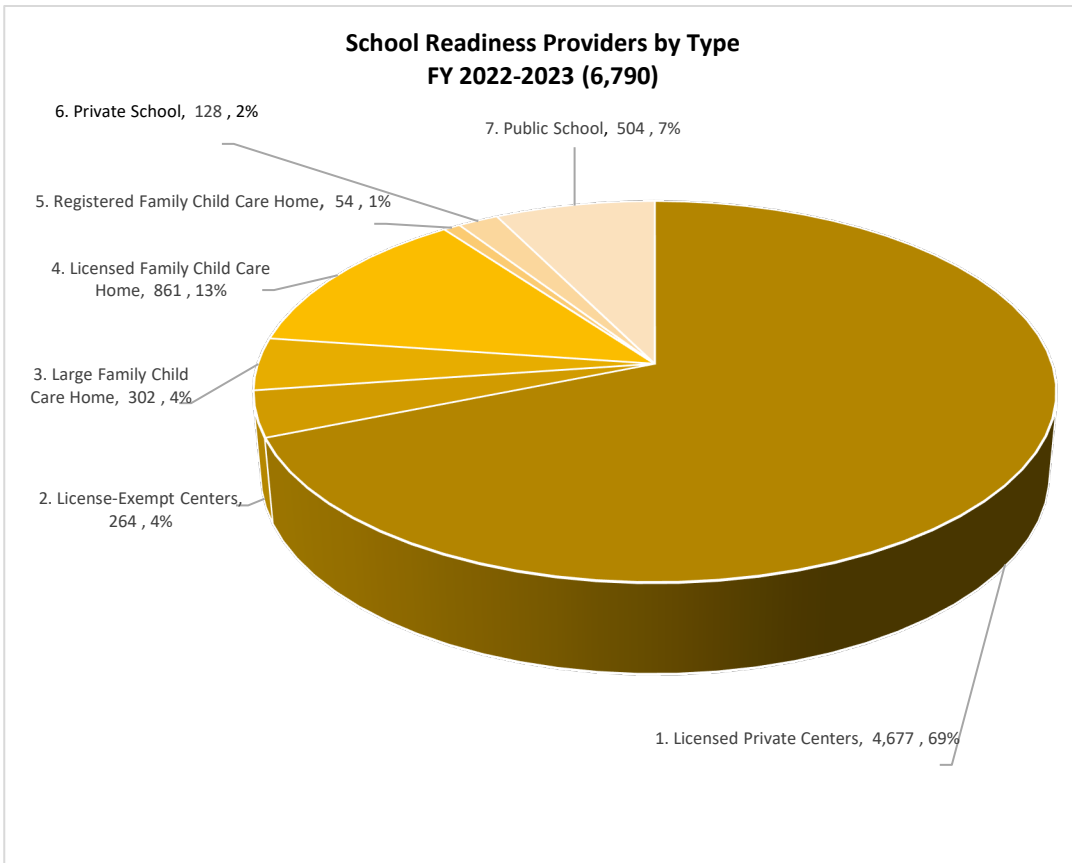
**SR CLASS Assessment Results- July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023**

**SR:**  
**More than 97%** of SR providers scored 4.00 or higher

| Overall Score Group | Count of SR Providers: |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Below 3.00          | 3                      |
| 3.00 to 3.49        | 12                     |
| 3.50 to 3.99        | 64                     |
| 4.00 to 4.49        | 657                    |
| 4.50 to 4.99        | 1,168                  |
| 5.00 to 5.49        | 987                    |
| 5.50 to 5.99        | 464                    |
| 6.00 to 6.49        | 108                    |
| 6.50 and above      | 222                    |
| <b>Grand Total</b>  | <b>3,685</b>           |

Total does not include providers exempt from CLASS.

Providers also have the option to participate in child assessments that are used to measure a child’s growth across the core domains of early childhood development. Participating providers receive a 5-percent differential payment per eligible child, per assessment period. In FY 2022-23, more than 600 SR providers received this differential.



Source: From EFS Modernization as of November 1, 2023

## **Warm Line Services**

Every ELC has a Warm Line for consultations with an inclusion coordinator. This service provides parents and providers with information relating to disabilities and special health care needs of children ages birth to 5. The inclusion coordinators work to ensure developmental screenings are conducted and that any recommended referrals are provided. Developmental screening is the practice of systematically looking for and monitoring signs that a young child may be delayed in one or more areas of development.

The Inclusion Network (Network) has more than 120 members including early childhood inclusion coordinators from each of the 30 early learning coalitions. DEL coordinates weekly meetings and one inclusion technical assistance meeting a year to share information, learn from guest speakers and discuss current needs related to children with developmental delays and disabilities for the Network. As part of their early learning services, each ELC offers Warm Line services to assist parents and providers with information and referrals for child evaluations and inclusive services.

The inclusion coordinators respond after a developmental screening has indicated areas of concern or when a warm line call comes through the early learning coalition. The inclusion coordinators support providers and parents with technical assistance, plan focused interventions for individual children who require additional supports and link early interventions for children prior to kindergarten entry.

For the FY 2022-23, the ELCs provided: 37,076 observations to address developmental concerns; 13,612 observations to address developmental concerns to help children succeed in the early learning environment; 2,189 observations to address each child's individual educational plans; 296 observations to address children who have medical concerns; 21,670 observations to assist early learning programs such as supporting teachers, classroom management guidance, curriculum support and environmental adaptations; 51,289 assessments; 87,985 technical assistance sessions; and 13,301 referrals to other agencies for services.

## **FY 2022-23 SR Highlights**

### **Florida Early Childhood Educator Training Stipends**

Through a partnership with the University of Florida (UF) Lastinger Center, DEL initiated Florida Early Childhood Educator Training Stipends that provided up to \$225 to eligible participants for completion of specific Department of Children and Families (DCF) and DEL courses. This initiative also provided stipends for business coaches who completed training

on provider business practices and then participated in coaching sessions. As a result, 9,474 stipends were issued to early childhood educators and business coach participants.

### **Screening and Assessment Practices**

DEL continued to increase screening practices among SR-enrolled children between the ages of 6 weeks and 60 months. The number of Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)-3 screenings has grown from 88,985 in 2021-22 to 118,525 in 2022-23. Early identification and intervention are key to addressing concerns with child development. In addition, parents may voluntarily complete the ASQ SE2 which measures self-regulation, compliance, social-communication, adaptive functioning and affect. Parent participation in the ASQ SE2 has grown significantly, from 54,462 in 2021 to 82,984 in 2022.

Child assessment is an ongoing process included as part of the quality differential for participating SR providers. Since inception, DEL has seen a consistent increase in provider participation and the total number of children impacted. During the 2019-20 program year, 447 providers participated impacting 8,139 children while the 2022-23 program year saw an increase to 609 providers impacting 14,807 children.

### **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Initiatives**

DEL used ARPA funds to launch several large initiatives, such as Build a World Class Workforce and Strengthen Adult-Child Interaction, that included support for SR providers and staff impacted by workforce challenges. The Elevate Florida's Early Learning Workforce initiative provided ELCs with additional funding to positively affect outcomes for children by improving teacher-child interactions through training to support CLASS implementation. Additionally, Continuous Quality Improvement Grants were offered to support effective local interactions, business and leadership practices, and child assessment and screening with reliability.

### **Economic Self-Sufficiency Analysis (ESSA) Annual Report**

DEL along with the Early Childhood Policy Research Group (ECPRG) at the University of Florida Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies released a final ESSA annual report as required under House Bill 1349 (2021). The results serve as a baseline to describe how low-income households enroll and participate in services that support access to health care, nutrition, housing, cash assistance and child care. To facilitate stakeholders' understanding, ECPRG created an ESSA website that includes interactive visualizations to illustrate participation and use at the state and local levels. This website is publicly available and housed on the Sunshine State Early Childhood Information Portal.



## **Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program**

The VPK program prepares children for success in school and in life. The program is a free, high-quality education program available to all 4-year-old children residing in the state. Parents of 4-year-olds with birthdays from February 2 through September 1 may wait to enroll their child the following year when they are five.

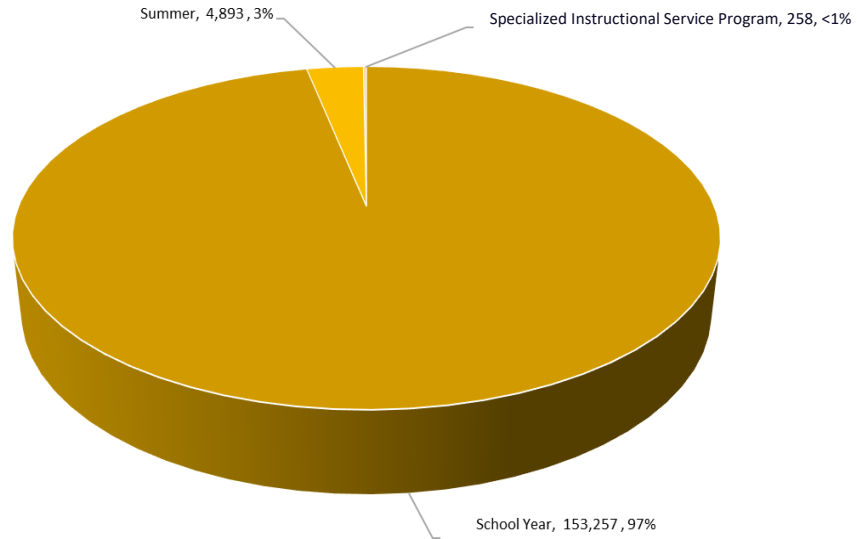
DEL administers VPK program operations at the state level. Mandated by the Florida Constitution, the program originated in 2002 from a ballot initiative proposing an amendment. Data collected by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) show that children who participate in VPK are better prepared to enter kindergarten ready to learn. Parents can select from one of several VPK program options available from private and public providers. Providers have flexibility to structure daily hours per week to meet the required number of instructional hours: School-Year Program - 540 instructional hours; Summer Program - 300 instructional hours.

VPK Specialized Instructional Services is a program option available for VPK-age children with current individual educational plans (IEPs). This option allows parents of a VPK-age child to choose additional therapy services consistent with the child's IEP in lieu of attending VPK in a traditional classroom setting. Providers must be approved by FDOE and meet specific licensing or certification requirements based on the type of specialized service they provide.

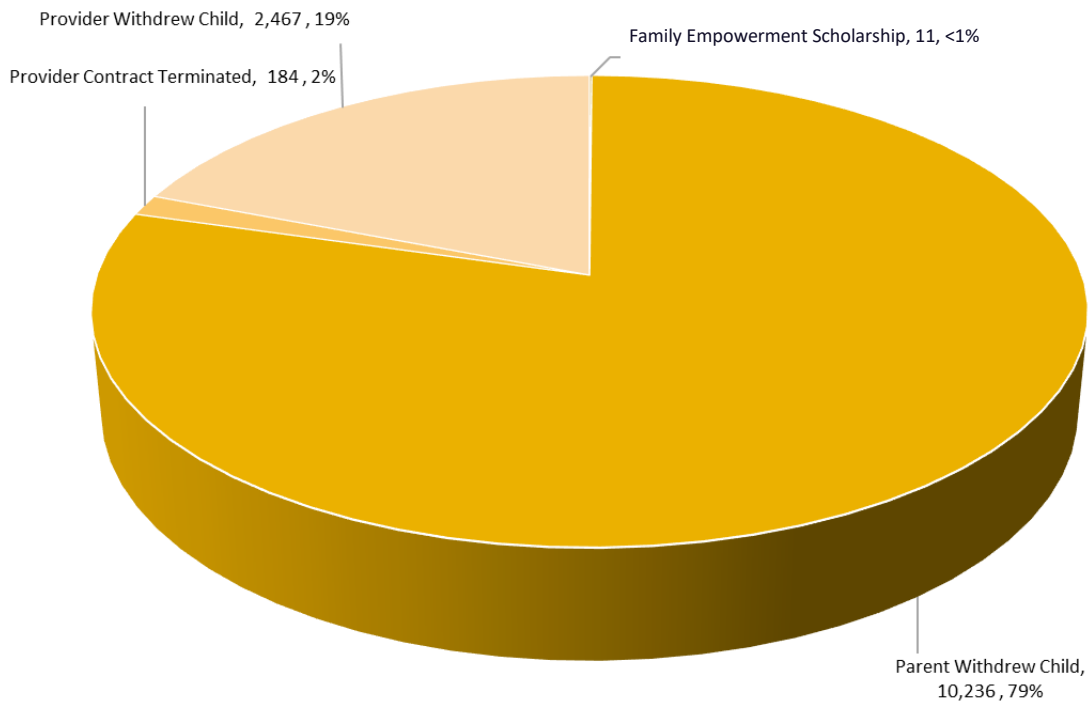
In FY 2022-23, there were 158,408 children enrolled with 6,237 providers in Florida's VPK program.



**Children Enrolled in VPK  
FY 2022-2023 (158,408)**



**Voluntary Prekindergarten Disenrollments  
by Source of Action FY 2022-2023 (12,898)**



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2023

## FY 2022-23 VPK Child Count by Coalition

| Coalition             | Child Count    |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Alachua               | 1,536          |
| Big Bend              | 2,763          |
| Brevard               | 4,670          |
| Broward               | 14,453         |
| Duval                 | 8,596          |
| Emerald Coast         | 2,287          |
| Escambia              | 1,806          |
| Flagler and Volusia   | 4,398          |
| Florida's Gateway     | 1,111          |
| Florida's Heartland   | 1,802          |
| Hillsborough          | 11,997         |
| IRMO                  | 2,396          |
| Lake                  | 2,656          |
| Manatee               | 2,808          |
| Marion                | 2,300          |
| Miami-Dade/<br>Monroe | 21,457         |
| Nature Coast          | 1,878          |
| North Florida         | 6,262          |
| Northwest Florida     | 1,779          |
| Orange                | 12,231         |
| Osceola               | 3,764          |
| Palm Beach            | 11,040         |
| Pasco-Hernando        | 6,197          |
| Pinellas              | 5,831          |
| Polk                  | 4,493          |
| Santa Rosa            | 1,122          |
| Sarasota              | 1,670          |
| Seminole              | 4,288          |
| Southwest Florida     | 7,508          |
| St. Lucie             | 2,625          |
| RCMA                  | 684            |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>158,408</b> |

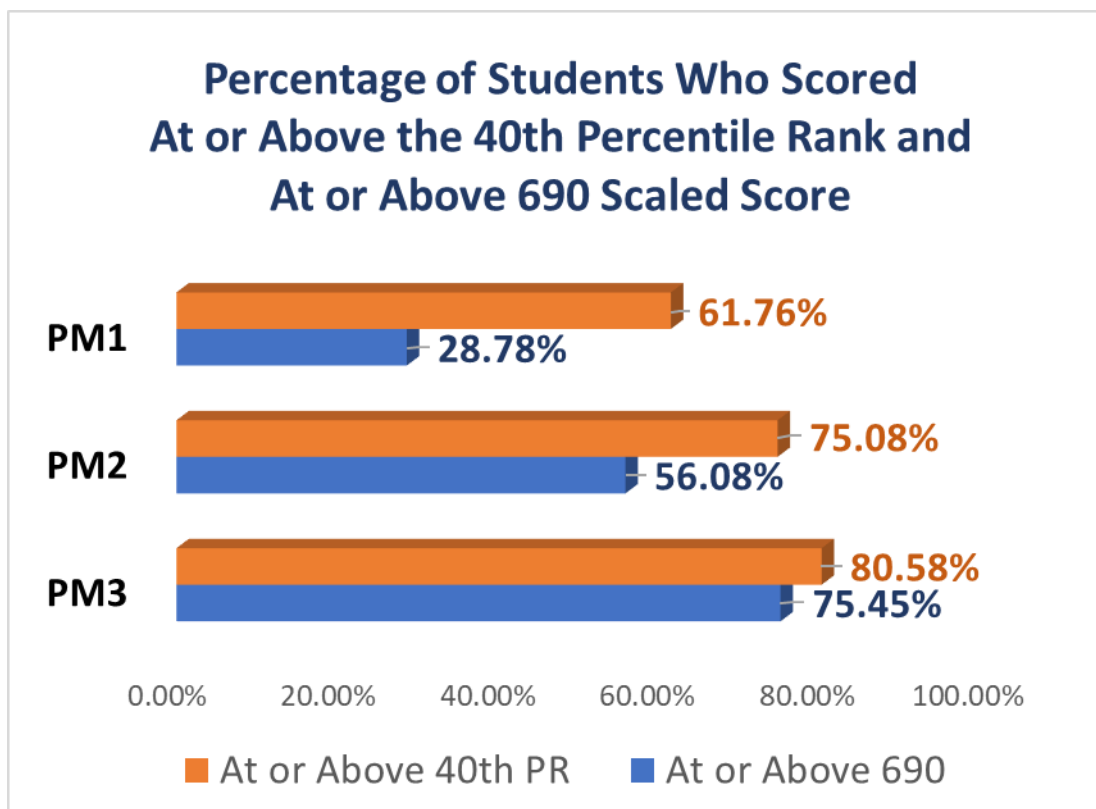
### Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring

The 2022-23 program year was the first year of implementation of the Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring program. This statewide, standardized program is known as Florida Assessment of Student Thinking or FAST Star Early Literacy. The FAST Star Early Literacy is a computer-adaptive assessment administered a minimum of three times a year (PM1, PM2 and PM3), designed to assess and monitor VPK student achievement and learning gains of the performance standards in early literacy and mathematics.

### FAST Star Early Literacy VPK Results

For the 2022-23 VPK program year, the below chart displays FAST Star Early Literacy results. The chart displays the percentage of students that scored at or above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile rank and at or above a scaled score of 690 by each progress monitoring period. A scaled score of 690 is the current cut score for determining kindergarten readiness.

By the end of the 2022-23 VPK program year's third and final progress monitoring (PM3), roughly 80% of VPK students scored at or above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile and about 75% of students scored at or above the 690 scaled score, meeting the current cut score for determining kindergarten readiness.



## VPK Program Assessments

The 2022-23 program year also was the first year of implementation of program assessment in all VPK programs as part of Florida’s new accountability system. The program assessment used is CLASS.

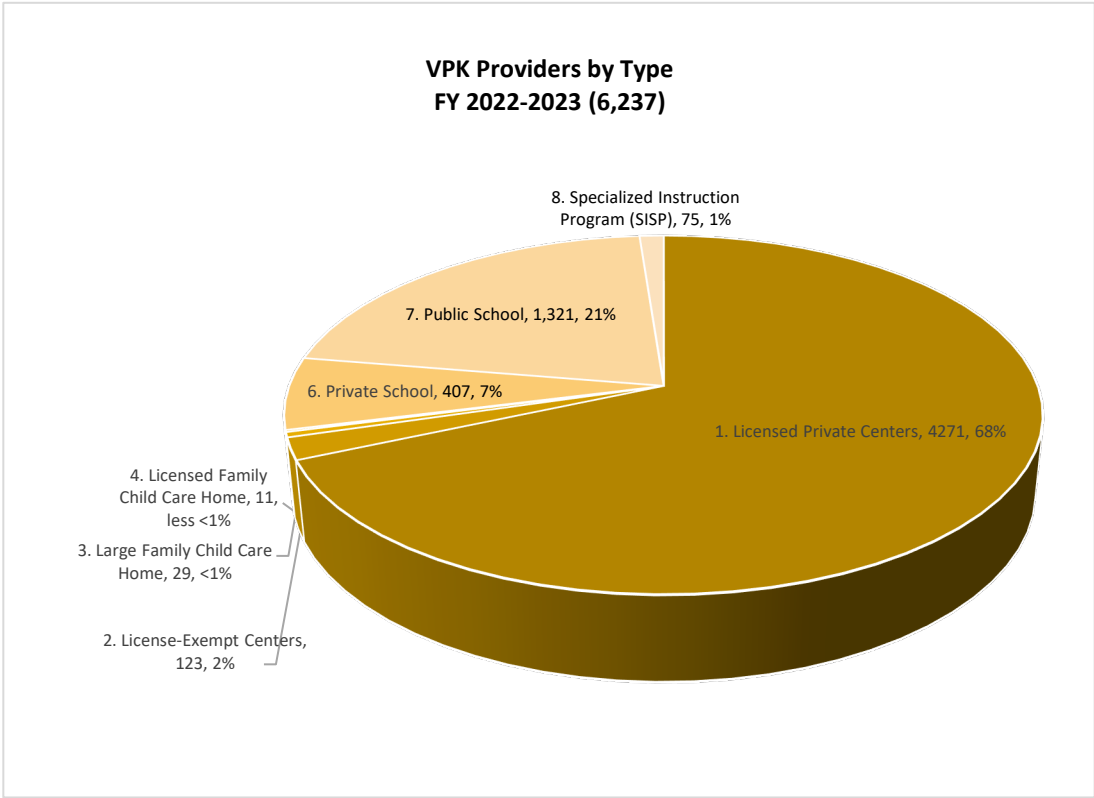
In FY 2022-23, more than 99 percent of participating VPK providers met the minimum contracting threshold by scoring 4.00 or higher on CLASS, and more than 84 percent of participating providers received a CLASS composite score higher than 4.50.

Starting in the 2023-24 program year, providers scoring below 4.00 will no longer be able to contract as a VPK provider.

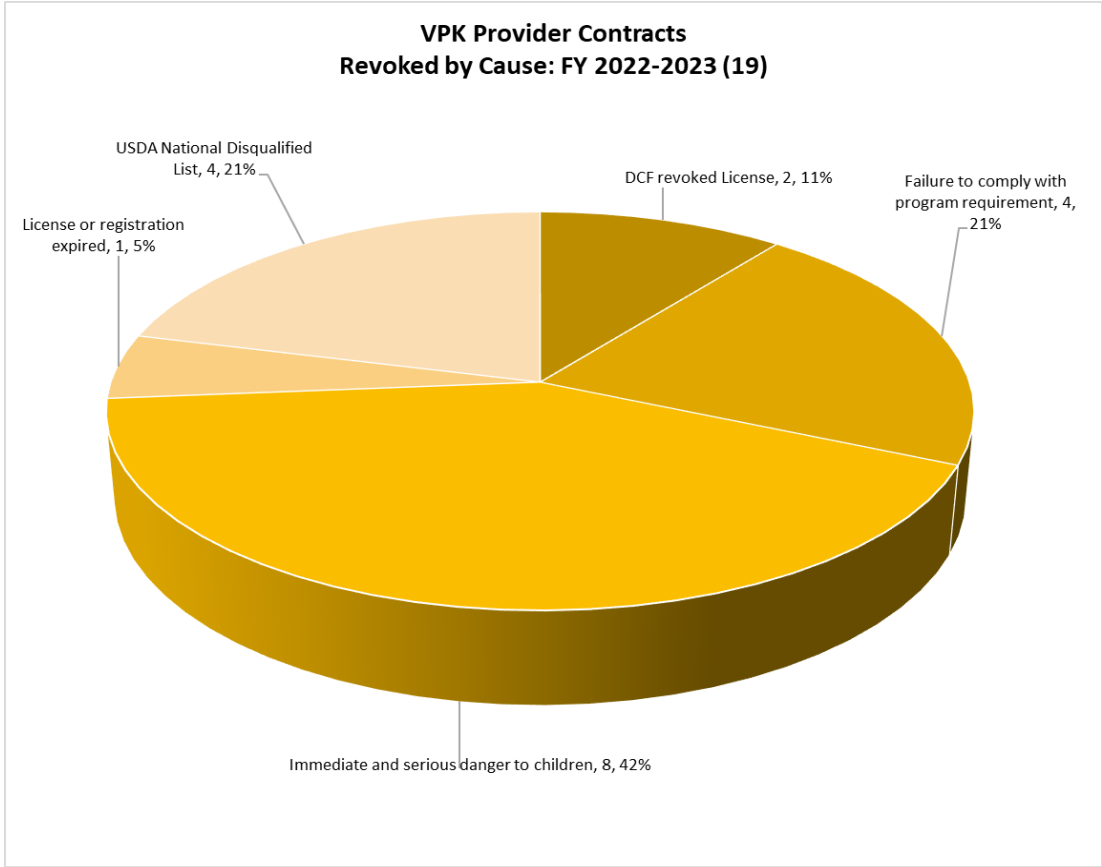
### VPK CLASS Assessment Results- July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023

**VPK:**  
 More than 99% of VPK providers scored 4.00 or higher

| Overall Score Group | Count of VPK Providers: |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Below 3.00          | 8                       |
| 3.00 to 3.49        | 10                      |
| 3.50 to 3.99        | 44                      |
| 4.00 to 4.49        | 894                     |
| 4.50 to 4.99        | 1,665                   |
| 5.00 to 5.49        | 1,908                   |
| 5.50 to 5.99        | 1,048                   |
| 6.00 to 6.49        | 320                     |
| 6.50 and above      | 320                     |
| <b>Grand Total</b>  | <b>6,217</b>            |



Source: August 10, 2023, VPK Estimating Conference.



Source: EFS Modernization database as of November 1, 2023

### Good Cause Exemptions (GCE) for VPK Providers

Prior to current statute delineating a new methodology for VPK program accountability, VPK providers received readiness rates based upon administration of the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS). Providers who received readiness rates below the minimum rate were placed on probation. Providers who remained on probation for two consecutive years or more and subsequently failed to meet the minimum rate could request the department to issue a good cause exemption which, if granted, would allow the provider to continue providing the VPK program. The exemption is valid for one year and may be renewed through the same application process annually.

The chart below includes the number of VPK providers on probation operating under a good cause exemption for the 2023-24 VPK program year.

| 2023-2024 GCE Eligible VPK Providers |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| School Year                          | 69 |
| Summer                               | 2  |

### FY 2022-23 VPK Highlights

#### Minimum Wage Funding

House Bill 5001, passed by the 2022 Florida Legislature, provided additional funding for a wage incentive program for VPK providers who pay their employees a minimum of \$15 per hour for VPK-related work duties. A total of 5,410 contracted VPK providers participated during the 2022-23 program year. The VPK provider wage incentive program expired on June 30, 2023.

#### VPK Accountability

Senate Bill 2502 amended s. 1002.68, F.S., in the 2023 legislative session providing an additional year before assignment of provider performance metrics/designations for VPK accountability. Beginning with the 2023-24 program year, the division must adopt a methodology for calculating a VPK provider performance metric using child learning gains and outcomes based on the Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring Program and provider program assessment composite scores that measure teacher-child interactions. If a VPK provider's performance designation falls below the adopted minimum performance

designation, the provider will be placed on probation and required to take corrective action including the use of an approved curriculum and a staff development plan adopted by the department. The new calculation and designations for VPK Accountability will be applied at the end of the 2024-25 program year.

**Emergent Literacy Micro Credential**

Created in partnership with the UF Lastinger Center for Learning, the literacy micro-credentials are available at no cost to Florida early educators in an effort to create accessible and on-demand literacy professional learning. The Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential prepares early learning educators to:

- Support child outcomes for school readiness,
- Identify emergent literacy needs of children,
- Apply evidence-based practices, and
- Engage in effective progress monitoring and instruction.

| <b>As of June 30, 2023</b>   |       |
|--|-------|
| Participants who fully completed the Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential.                           | 649   |
| Participants who were in the process of completing the Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential courses. | 2,179 |



## **Gold Seal Quality Care Program**

In 2021, House Bill 419 provided for a type two transfer of the Gold Seal Quality Care Program from DCF to FDOE. The Gold Seal program was established in 1996 to acknowledge child care facilities and family day care homes that have gone above the required minimum licensing standards to become accredited by recognized agencies whose standards reflect quality in the level of care and supervision provided to children.

Participation in this program is voluntary and is available to all provider types that meet the definition of child care except for certain license-exempt school-age programs identified in Chapter 65C-22.008(3), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) The Gold Seal program provides benefits to participating providers that include, but are not limited to, tax exemptions on certain educational materials and property taxes and higher reimbursement for SR providers.

At the end of FY 2022-23, there were 16 approved Gold Seal accrediting associations that accredit 1,827 Gold Seal designated child care programs. Close to 22 percent of SR and VPK providers possess the Gold Seal designation.

## **Head Start Collaboration Office**

The Florida Head Start State Collaboration Office operates within DEL and works to support and improve the collaboration between Early Head Start/Head Start and other providers of educational, medical and social services in Florida to support the state's most vulnerable children and families. The office coordinates federal, state and local policy to help ensure a high-quality and unified early care and education system for the state. In partnership with DEL and the Florida Head Start Association (FHSA), the Collaboration Office works to coordinate activities within key state agencies and other early childhood associations and advocacy groups to support the comprehensive services provided by Head Start programs.



Florida offers a total of 133 programs which include 58 Head Start programs, 71 Early Head Start programs, two Seasonal and Migrant Head Start programs, and two Seasonal and Migrant Early Head Start programs. During the 2022-23 school year, 42,743 students and their families were served across all programs.

## **Financial Review**

### **Descriptions of Expenditure Classifications**

School Readiness Program expenditures are classified in accordance with federal regulations (45 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) section 98) and state statutes (s. 1002.82, F.S.). The following table describes the expenditure classifications for tracking and reporting program expenditures.

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Direct Costs</b>         | Costs for direct payments to child care facilities for child care.  |
| <b>Gold Seal Costs</b>      | Costs related to the Gold Seal Quality Care program, which allows higher reimbursement per child for providers that are accredited by nationally recognized agencies and meet quality standards.  |
| <b>Administrative Costs</b> | <p>Cost identified in federal regulations that include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Salaries and related costs to staff engaged in administering and implementing programs.</li> <li>– Developing agreements.</li> <li>– Evaluating program results.</li> <li>– Procurement and contract management.</li> <li>– Providing local officials and the public with program information.</li> <li>– Fiscal and budgetary activities.</li> <li>– Legal services.</li> <li>– Resolution of audit findings.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Non-Direct Costs</b>     | <p>Costs for services not classified as administrative or direct payment for child care services. These services include, but are not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Helping families complete required application and eligibility documentation.</li> <li>– Determining child and family eligibility.</li> <li>– Recruiting eligible child care providers.</li> <li>– Processing and tracking attendance records.</li> <li>– Developing and maintaining a statewide child care information system.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Quality Costs</b>        | <p>Costs related to activities to improve child care quality such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Developing, establishing, expanding, operating, and coordinating resource and referral programs specifically related to the provision of comprehensive consumer education to parents and the public to promote informed child care choices.</li> <li>– Awarding grants and providing financial support to SR providers and their staff to assist them in meeting applicable state requirements for the program assessment; child care performance standards; implementing developmentally appropriate curricula and related classroom resources that support curricula; providing literacy supports; and providing continued professional learning and training.</li> <li>– Providing training, technical assistance, and financial support to SR providers, staff and parents on standards, child screenings, child assessments, child development research and best practices, developmentally appropriate curricula, character development, teacher-child interactions, age-appropriate discipline practices, health and safety, nutrition, first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, the recognition of communicable diseases, and child abuse detection, prevention, and reporting.</li> <li>– Providing, from among the above funds, adequate funding for infants and toddlers as necessary to meet federal requirements related to expenditures for quality activities for infant and toddler care.</li> <li>– Improving the monitoring of compliance with, and enforcement of, applicable state and local requirements.</li> <li>– Responding to Warm-Line requests by providers and parents, including providing developmental and health screenings to SR program children.</li> </ul> |

The following tables show program expenditures in support of the SR and VPK programs during FY 2022-23.

**FY 2022-23 School Readiness Quality Expenditures**

| <i>Quality and Enhancement Activities as described in s. 1002.89 (4)(b), Florida Statutes</i> |                                    |  |   |   |                         |
|---|------------------------------------|--|---|---|-------------------------|
| <b>Comprehensive Consumer Education</b>   | <b>Provider Financial Supports</b> | <b>Training and Technical Assistance</b> | <b>Quality Activities for Infant and Toddler Care</b> | <b>Responding to Warm-Line Requests</b> | <b>Statewide Total*</b> |
| <b>\$12,785,192</b>   | <b>\$44,350,636</b>                | <b>\$101,422,230</b>                     | <b>\$6,112,332</b>                                    | <b>\$4,278,878</b>                      | <b>\$168,949,268</b>    |

*Source: DEL SR Expenditure Workbooks FY 2022-23 data as of October 19, 2023, does not reflect final expenditure reconciliations.*

\*The department transferred \$10,598,743.25 to the Department of Children and Families for the remaining activity to improve the monitoring of compliance with and enforcement of applicable state and local requirements.

## FY 2022-23 Coalition-Level School Readiness Program Expenditures

| Coalition           | Total Expenditures w/Cash Match | Direct Services Expenditures Percentage | Administrative Expenditure Percentage | Non-Direct Services Expenditure Percentage | Quality Expenditure Percentage |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Alachua             | \$10,773,187                    | 81.69%                                  | 4.44%                                 | 8.11%                                      | 5.76%                          |
| Big Bend            | \$21,522,334                    | 83.20%                                  | 5.09%                                 | 4.84%                                      | 6.86%                          |
| Brevard             | \$24,180,310                    | 85.71%                                  | 4.63%                                 | 5.01%                                      | 4.64%                          |
| Broward             | \$103,848,951                   | 86.48%                                  | 3.48%                                 | 6.03%                                      | 4.01%                          |
| Duval               | \$57,356,206                    | 81.60%                                  | 2.63%                                 | 4.59%                                      | 11.18%                         |
| Emerald Coast       | \$7,429,043                     | 82.05%                                  | 3.08%                                 | 7.55%                                      | 7.32%                          |
| Escambia            | \$16,749,183                    | 83.39%                                  | 2.76%                                 | 5.41%                                      | 8.44%                          |
| Flagler and Volusia | \$27,560,048                    | 83.06%                                  | 2.57%                                 | 3.90%                                      | 10.47%                         |
| Gateway             | \$9,953,968                     | 82.79%                                  | 3.89%                                 | 6.52%                                      | 6.81%                          |
| Heartland           | \$11,552,683                    | 83.52%                                  | 3.81%                                 | 7.39%                                      | 5.29%                          |
| Hillsborough        | \$75,580,061                    | 81.40%                                  | 4.62%                                 | 6.16%                                      | 7.83%                          |
| IRMO                | \$9,925,495                     | 82.33%                                  | 3.53%                                 | 6.84%                                      | 7.31%                          |
| Lake                | \$11,354,289                    | 78.18%                                  | 4.60%                                 | 4.75%                                      | 12.47%                         |
| Manatee             | \$17,780,598                    | 82.56%                                  | 3.75%                                 | 3.06%                                      | 10.63%                         |
| Marion              | \$12,675,551                    | 82.73%                                  | 3.80%                                 | 6.10%                                      | 7.37%                          |
| Miami-Dade/ Monroe  | \$127,623,477                   | 80.12%                                  | 3.58%                                 | 7.58%                                      | 8.72%                          |
| Nature Coast        | \$10,371,401                    | 80.28%                                  | 4.22%                                 | 7.92%                                      | 7.57%                          |
| North Florida       | \$19,374,719                    | 80.59%                                  | 3.98%                                 | 5.06%                                      | 10.37%                         |
| Northwest Florida   | \$17,196,321                    | 88.90%                                  | 1.94%                                 | 4.79%                                      | 4.36%                          |
| Orange              | \$74,248,655                    | 84.61%                                  | 2.54%                                 | 4.80%                                      | 8.05%                          |
| Osceola             | \$16,258,402                    | 83.30%                                  | 3.49%                                 | 4.40%                                      | 8.82%                          |
| Palm Beach          | \$83,848,698                    | 82.52%                                  | 3.65%                                 | 5.79%                                      | 8.04%                          |
| Pasco-Hernando      | \$17,907,108                    | 82.43%                                  | 3.85%                                 | 7.31%                                      | 6.41%                          |
| Pinellas            | \$37,074,158                    | 80.32%                                  | 4.29%                                 | 6.07%                                      | 9.33%                          |
| Polk                | \$38,067,305                    | 82.19%                                  | 3.12%                                 | 7.26%                                      | 7.43%                          |
| Santa Rosa          | \$4,440,484                     | 81.82%                                  | 4.48%                                 | 7.91%                                      | 5.79%                          |
| Sarasota            | \$9,567,436                     | 86.31%                                  | 2.96%                                 | 4.95%                                      | 5.83%                          |
| Seminole            | \$16,895,073                    | 82.38%                                  | 1.00%                                 | 4.48%                                      | 12.13%                         |
| Southwest Florida   | \$32,598,230                    | 87.72%                                  | 3.20%                                 | 4.02%                                      | 5.06%                          |
| St. Lucie           | \$18,005,599                    | 88.03%                                  | 2.76%                                 | 2.91%                                      | 6.30%                          |
| RCMA                | \$12,274,786                    | 81.61%                                  | 3.75%                                 | 12.78%                                     | 1.86%                          |
| <b>Statewide</b>    | <b>\$953,993,761</b>            | <b>82.99%</b>                           | <b>3.49%</b>                          | <b>5.78%</b>                               | <b>7.69%</b>                   |

Source: DEL SR Expenditure Workbooks FY 2022-23 data as of October 19, 2023, does not reflect final expenditure reconciliations.

## FY 2022-23 Coalition-Level Voluntary Prekindergarten Program Expenditures

| Coalition           | Total Administrative Expenditures | Total Direct Services Expenditures | Total All Expenditures  | % for Admin  |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Alachua             | \$143,856                         | \$3,711,483                        | \$3,855,340             | 3.88%        |
| Big Bend            | \$234,358                         | \$6,457,339                        | \$6,691,697             | 3.63%        |
| Brevard             | \$446,171                         | \$11,944,035                       | \$12,390,206            | 3.74%        |
| Broward             | \$1,433,447                       | \$36,778,669                       | \$38,212,116            | 3.90%        |
| Duval               | \$814,132                         | \$21,754,291                       | \$22,568,423            | 3.74%        |
| Emerald Coast       | \$226,434                         | \$5,674,461                        | \$5,900,895             | 3.99%        |
| Escambia            | \$170,126                         | \$4,489,046                        | \$4,659,172             | 3.79%        |
| Flagler and Volusia | \$383,828                         | \$10,670,510                       | \$11,054,338            | 3.60%        |
| Gateway             | \$88,410                          | \$2,691,306                        | \$2,779,715             | 3.29%        |
| Heartland           | \$163,333                         | \$4,204,148                        | \$4,367,481             | 3.89%        |
| Hillsborough        | \$822,383                         | \$29,242,803                       | \$30,065,186            | 2.81%        |
| IRMO                | \$156,940                         | \$6,182,738                        | \$6,339,677             | 2.54%        |
| Lake                | \$266,359                         | \$6,659,010                        | \$6,925,370             | 4.00%        |
| Manatee             | \$279,991                         | \$6,999,768                        | \$7,279,759             | 4.00%        |
| Marion              | \$232,305                         | \$5,152,603                        | \$5,384,908             | 4.51%        |
| Miami-Dade/Monroe   | \$1,491,896                       | \$55,350,962                       | \$56,842,857            | 2.70%        |
| Nature Coast        | \$178,822                         | \$4,443,439                        | \$4,622,262             | 4.02%        |
| North Florida       | \$507,795                         | \$15,703,269                       | \$16,211,064            | 3.23%        |
| Northwest Florida   | \$97,322                          | \$4,227,606                        | \$4,324,928             | 2.30%        |
| Orange              | \$1,237,619                       | \$31,194,852                       | \$32,432,470            | 3.97%        |
| Osceola             | \$361,614                         | \$9,079,230                        | \$9,440,844             | 3.98%        |
| Palm Beach          | \$1,161,737                       | \$29,110,363                       | \$30,272,100            | 3.99%        |
| Pasco-Hernando      | \$610,326                         | \$15,020,870                       | \$15,631,196            | 4.06%        |
| Pinellas            | \$541,065                         | \$14,682,899                       | \$15,223,963            | 3.68%        |
| Polk                | \$413,476                         | \$10,821,165                       | \$11,234,641            | 3.82%        |
| Santa Rosa          | \$110,895                         | \$2,713,114                        | \$2,824,009             | 4.09%        |
| Sarasota            | \$133,392                         | \$4,105,095                        | \$4,238,487             | 3.25%        |
| Seminole            | \$423,225                         | \$10,580,635                       | \$11,003,861            | 4.00%        |
| Southwest Florida*  | \$616,292                         | \$20,530,871                       | \$21,147,163            | 3.00%        |
| St. Lucie           | \$159,832                         | \$6,387,083                        | \$6,546,916             | 2.50%        |
| <b>Statewide</b>    | <b>\$13,907,380</b>               | <b>\$396,563,661</b>               | <b>\$410,471,041.44</b> | <b>3.51%</b> |

Source: DEL VPK Expenditure Workbooks FY 2022-23 data as of October 19, 2023, does not reflect final expenditure reconciliations.

\*Includes Redlands Christian Migrant Association

## Fraud Prevention

The Fraud Prevention Unit focuses on providing technical assistance, sharing best practices and partnering with other government agencies to identify potentially fraudulent activity.

The Fraud Prevention Unit reviewed and forwarded suspected fraud cases identified by the coalitions for the SR and VPK programs to the Florida Department of Financial Services, Division of Public Assistance Fraud (DPAF) for criminal investigation. In turn, DPAF referred cases to the appropriate State Attorney’s Office for criminal prosecution.

During FY 2022-23, the restitution ordered for fraud referral cases filed by the State Attorney’s offices totaled \$50,371.24, and DEL collected \$120,079.14 in restitution payments from recipient cases referred in 2022-23 and prior fiscal years. No provider cases referred in FY 2022-23 were closed as of year-end.

| FY 2022-23 Provider Fraud Case Referrals and Status       |   |
|---|---|
| SR/VPK providers DEL referred to DPAF for investigation.  | 4 |
| Provider cases being screened by DPAF.                    | 1 |
| Provider cases DPAF did not investigate.                  | 1 |
| Provider cases pending assignment to a DPAF investigator. | 2 |

| FY 2022-23 Recipient Fraud Case Referrals and Status   |     |
|--|-----|
| Number of SR recipients referred to DPAF for criminal investigation.   | 165 |
| Number of SR recipient cases DPAF did not investigate.   | 77  |
| Number of cases in screening status or pending assignment to a DPAF investigator.  | 83  |
| Number of SR cases that DPAF is actively investigating, or a request was made for over payment/over issuance assistance. | 1   |
| Number of SR recipient cases sent to DPAF that are still awaiting status   | 4   |

Source: Fraud Referral System as of July 1, 2023.

## EARLY LEARNING COALITIONS

The following summaries are examples of the type of ELC activities to effectively implement CCR&R, SR, VPK, and early learning initiatives.

### Comprehensive Consumer Education

#### Flagler and Volusia

The ELC of Flagler-Volusia promoted programs and services available by:

- Connecting 3,379 families to resources through Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) services.
- Assisting 165 families through our Rising Up program which provides families with the support and guidance needed to reach their goals through optional personalized goal planning, family-specific resources and referrals for beneficial services.
- Hosting 126 family engagement outreach events, providing 924 children with family engagement activities, age-appropriate literature and resources.

These connections provided the community and partners with opportunities to learn about quality child care, community resources, parent education and early child development.

#### Marion

ELC of Marion County partners with Family Times Magazine, a bi-monthly print and digital publication, on an annual Early Learning issue. The 2023 April / May issue included a nine-page child care provider directory and full-page ads for both SR and CCR&R programs.

Family Times Magazine is distributed to approximately 30,000 readers.

#### Southwest Florida

From March to June, 2023, the ELC of Southwest Florida embarked on a VPK Education campaign which involved social media, newspaper and TV interviews, radio, magazine, and TV ads, and a bus wrapped in information about VPK. Results of this campaign show VPK applications were up by 2,900. In addition, our ELC partnered with a number of community agencies to spread the word about the availability of VPK, and its many benefits.

### Provider Financial Supports

#### Florida's Gateway

ELC of Florida's Gateway provided wage incentives for the 100 percent completion of the following training series:

- Infant/Toddler CLASS Group Coaching (MMCI)
- Prekindergarten CLASS Group Coaching (MMCI)

The coalition also provided educational scholarships for the Florida child care professional credential, directors credential, associate and bachelor's degrees in early childhood education; SR curriculum support; and provided child assessment support.

### **Northwest Florida**

The professional learning element of the ARPA Build a World-Class Workforce grant funds emphasized quality CLASS-focused training for early childhood teachers. Utilizing the training provided through DCF, FDOE and Teachstone, teachers had the opportunity to gain new knowledge and techniques to help them provide quality care to the children and families served. ELC of Northwest Florida supported 255 early learning professionals with a combined \$421,672.71 in stipends. Additionally, child care business owners applied for grants up to \$19,800 to build their own 24-hour professional development program, with 24 grants totaling \$453,250 awarded.

### **Osceola**

Several grants, awards and bonuses were made available to SR program providers to enhance child care quality. This is done primarily through the Infant/Toddler Capacity Building Initiative and the Child Development Associate (CDA) program. The Infant/Toddler Capacity Building Initiative in Osceola County involves providers committing to evaluating and increasing their capacity to care for infants and toddlers, including number of slots and overall quality. Selected providers receive initial incentives to improve infant/toddler care facilities. Participating providers receive support in three phases, including financial grants, coaching and staff professional learning, and they are monitored to ensure success with their support plan and goals. In the CDA program, participants must be employed with a contracted Osceola Provider and receive support to complete their CDA credential through supports with professional learning, portfolio review and final assessment.

## **Training and Technical Assistance**

### **Alachua County**

ELC of Alachua County uses the Anita Zucker Center's Practiced-Based Coaching (PBC) Model with many providers throughout Alachua County. Using the PBC model, staff worked with directors and teachers to help achieve their targeted goals for best teaching practices based on their own self-need assessments. The choices for best practices are research-based and were created to align with standards and dimensions supporting the CLASS observation tool. Twenty-five child care providers participated and 41 teachers were trained in 35 classrooms involving 202 children.



## **Big Bend Region**

ELC of the Big Bend introduced a comprehensive professional development system for early learning educators in seven counties. This initiative primarily featured online training, offering 65 courses aligned with Florida's Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners. These courses proved invaluable to meet credential renewal requirements, with offerings ranging from one to 24 in-service hours, achieving the following:

- Five classroom training sessions, engaging 136 early learning participants and 10 ELC staff, resulting in 52 in-service hours.
- 64 online courses attracting 1,169 early learning participants, contributing 1,059 total in-service hours.

## **Palm Beach**

The coalition offered a total of 276 training sessions, with 2,794 participants in attendance. Trainings were offered for both educators and families. Technical assistance staff offered 6,011 coaching hours at programs across Palm Beach County.

Additionally, the coalition launched Age of Learning with VPK programs in the second half of the school year. This optional program offered to all contracted VPK providers consisted of an online platform that felt like play for children and offered strong early literacy and math skill-building activities. Using this platform for just 15 minutes a day as part of choice activities led to positive results for Palm Beach County rising Kindergarteners. A recently validated study with a pilot group of VPK programs showed use of Age of Learning closed the learning gap between research sites and non-research sites by 84 percent in STAR Early Literacy test scores.

## **Quality Activities for Infant and Toddler Care**

### **Pasco and Hernando**

The ELC of Pasco and Hernando counties employed an infant and toddler specialist, offering critical support to various programs. Notably, Language Environment Analysis (LENA) Grow, combining technology and coaching to enhance infant and toddler brain development, training 19 teachers across 13 classrooms and benefiting 91 children. This specialist's role has had a significant positive impact on early childhood education in the region.

### **Santa Rosa**

The coalition operated Bound Together, a literacy program encouraging parents to read to and with their children in partnership with Santa Rosa businesses.

- Bins of books were placed in waiting room areas where parents would have the

opportunity to read to their children while waiting on a service.

- Business partnerships included medical offices, educational institutions, insurance offices, banks and others.

Books distributed included information about how to access reading tips for infants and toddlers located on the coalition's website. A total of 47 businesses participated in Bound Together.

### **Sarasota**

The ELC of Sarasota's whimsical, fantastical Storybook Street event was again an overwhelming success as the agency hosted its signature event for the third time. In February 2023, the ELC partnered with Suncoast Technical College and Sarasota's premier arts agencies to present the free, literacy-meets-the-arts extravaganza designed for children ages birth to five. Children received new books and had the opportunity to watch those same books come to life right in front of their eyes, with 4,700 books distributed to nearly 300 families in two hours. Each family received 16 new books.

## **Inclusion/Warm Line Services**

### **Brevard**

In partnership with Space Coast Early Steps, the ELC of Brevard County created an informational movie to demonstrate the referral process and the coaching model. Through a local grant from the Brevard Community Association and professionally produced by Sky Advertising, the video was made available to all SR and VPK providers and can be found on the Space Coast Early Steps and coalition websites.

### **Marion**

The ELC of Marion County's (ELCMC) Inclusion Coordinator focused on streamlining processes to connect families and teachers with the most appropriate support for each child's situation. Due to a well-defined follow-up process, families and their child care providers receive communication about potential developmental concerns and together create a plan to address these areas.

Through Help Me Grow Marion, ELCMC hosts Books, Balls, and Blocks developmental screening events to educate families on the importance of early screening and developmental milestones. Working through partnerships with the pediatric medical community allows the ELC to remove connection barriers and better serve our children and families with inclusion needs.

## Pasco-Hernando

The ELC of Pasco and Hernando Counties Developmental Service department responds to all inclusion/warm line requests. Staff provided on-site technical assistance and coaching to providers in need of assistance regarding the areas of positive behavior supports, individualized learning plans, environmental adaptations and assist parents/guardians with referrals to community resources. In FY 2022-23, the coalition:

- Completed 5,419 ASQ screenings.
- Provided 4,200 technical assistance supports.
- Created 910 individualized intervention practice plans.
- Made 886 referrals made to partnering agencies.

DEL is committed to ensuring Florida's early care and education providers and teachers have access to the best resources and support to serve Florida's children and families.

